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ABSTRACT

Local ministers and congregations are encouraged to join with, and take advantage of, the community college as a means of reaching and helping the new breed of college student who attends a community college. The traditional approach of campus ministry is discussed, and the differences in the life situation of community college students are pointed out. Also discussed are the church's concern for the learning environment, liberation for the disenfranchised (demographic information about community college students), the possibilities for ministry for and with teachers, the ways community colleges serve the communities, and dealing with decision-makers (administrators and the Board of Trustees). (KM)

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PEOPLE CHANGERS NEED EACH OTHER

The Church and the Community College
A Call to Local Congregations

Mary Alice Geier, 1973

There's a giant of an institution in our communities, but it is not the giant who is sleeping. That giant is perhaps the most ecumenical* phenomenon around. It has assumed Herculean tasks which the church long believed to be a special prerogative: literally, the salvation (or salvage) of souls, the transformation of lives. It offers help and hope to educationally and vocationally helpless (or crippled) in a setting of acceptance and practical supportiveness. It is time we woke up and took note of the giant!

The Community College, sitting there within your parish and mine, may be enrolling as many as 80% of the high school graduates for their first year of college work. 42% is the over-all average nationally. Nearly one third of all students in higher education in the United States are attending the two-year colleges; soon it will be one half of the nation's undergraduates. The chances are good that mothers and fathers from your church families, as well as the youth, are engaged within this college, indeed, spending more hours in a week there than they are within the church. What is happening to them there may be more immediately or measurably significant for change in their life style and life work than can be guaranteed through their church involvement, if any. It's a cinch that within the college are those disaffected from and unaffected by organized religion because of economics, culture, sociology, educational opportunity or motivation. The college, which is common to all the communities-within-a-community, could be a most important link for any local church whose concern for mission extends beyond its parish walls. Yet churches have barely become aware of the existence, let alone the significance, of the community "junior" college.

This presentation is a call for the church, particularly the local church, to join forces with a parallel institution, the Community College, to exploit it as a resource for doing its own work better, and to call the college to make good on its promises in behalf of our common community. A rationale for such involvement will be developed from several starting points.

First, as a pastor, are you aware and is your congregation aware of what happens to a person enrolled at a two-year college? To what extent does such schooling either increase options for self-actualization or limit them? Can this experience contribute to one's growth as a caring person able to translate faith into living? This is the pastoral concern that extends beyond Sunday morning out into the workaday world of your parishioners.

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Second, take a new look at the commitment of our national church bodies in recent years to work on behalf of the disfranchised and powerless of society, our concern for equal opportunity, racial justice, urban crises and welfare reform. This contemporary Christian mission converges dramatically with the clientele and concerns of your community's two-year people's college.

A third starting perspective is to see the church as an institution carrying responsibility for institutional integrity within the total community, and particularly within public education, which leads into concern about governance, use of tax monies, and citizen participation in decision-making.

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*"out of many, one"

Assuming general unfamiliarity with this unique sector of public higher education on the part of church professionals, background material about the goals and operation of these colleges will be shared. Some comparisons will be made with traditional "campus ministry," and a generally different approach implied.

Practical strategy has been described in my booklet, "There's a Community College in My Town: What Do I Do Now?" written for those who have already become motivated to undertake such exploration and involvement. My hope in this paper is to fire such motivations; define basic assumptions that lead unmistakably in these directions; indeed, to persuade you to enlist in ministry, of yourself and your church, with the community college near you.

Traditional approach of Campus Ministry

To look briefly at the traditional ways in which the church has expressed concern for ministry within higher education, we see a primarily shepherding and religious education purpose with persons already part of a faith community. There was at least a hidden agenda of training for churchmanship, of keeping potential leaders within the fold (perhaps untainted from the world), guaranteeing their eventual return to the home church. Denominations established centers and chaplaincies at private and public colleges, usually the most prestigious institutions. Increasingly, the church has sought also to present the claims of Christianity to those not in the fold in these market places of ideas and professional training, an effort of evangelism in a broad sense. Professional campus ministers have become more and more involved in the life of the campus itself, finding education a legitimate arena within which Christian social concern can be acted upon, and within which Christian citizenship can be exercised regarding public policies. But scratch the surface of local church concern of "campus ministry," and you will still find as primary motivation the pastoral concern of its own young.

While the local church sometimes makes sincere effort to keep in touch with its youth away at college, the campus minister has had the responsibility for all areas which the local church feels important for its youth: the pastoral, study within the faith, vocational counsel, motivation to service and experiences of involvement in mission. The churches have supported an "our-man-on-campus" approach, dealing in group programming, counseling, dialogue, and (in more recent years) with advocacy for student rights along with civil rights in general. During the late 1960s, campus ministers often played an ombudsman role on the campus, able to keep communication open between conflicting forces.

But what of the community colleges? With specialized ministries of all kinds the first to go in budget cuts, it is ridiculous to dream that Protestant churches could place professional staff at some 1,000 two-year colleges! (The number has about doubled since 1960, from 678 then to 1,070 in 1970.) Besides, these students have not "gone away to school," they are right here, still within the parish. Campus Ministry becomes part of the close-at-hand agenda of the local church.

Difference in Life Situation

The approach with which we have been familiar assumes that a "student" is a youth embarked on a four-year residential hitch, his primary vocational identity that of being a learner in a period of preparation: preparation for marriage and parenthood, for work, and for adult citizenship.

Many changes in this pattern are evident today at all levels of higher education. For students enrolled in community colleges, almost none of this life situation holds true.

The age and status at entry into post-high school education for those at the community colleges covers a wide range, and is likely to be older on the average (above 25). Many are already parents and householders. Presently many are veterans of an overseas experience that has certainly aged them. All are commuters, to and from: classes, jobs, home responsibilities. The large proportion of them are wage earners. Their vocational identity may derive mostly from how they earn a living, their work toward a degree or occupational certificate a more incidental part of their lives. Thus they invest little of themselves into the life of the campus itself, for they are just passing through on their way to something else. Some students take many semesters to complete the necessary work of a particular program, because they cannot afford to be full-time students, yet the mind set is that of transiency. Statistics count many drop-outs. It is possible to interpret the pattern as a series of step-outs and step-ins, an escalator kind of education. Whatever their motivation for post-secondary training, few students go initially to a counselor and are likely to plan their course work cafeteria style, fitting in classes around time periods when they are free from a job or baby-sitting, day or evening.

The well known OPEN DOOR policy of public Community Colleges beckons many who before would never have considered higher education, many "first generation" college goers. The term "NEW STUDENT" is used extensively to describe them, most definitively by Pat Cross in her Beyond the Open Door[2]. They are likely to have been academic low-achievers, perhaps with pervasive experience of failure in the American school system. And those poor students who are also poor have a second (perhaps a first) chance in the peoples' college, where tuition is minimal or free.

It is really important for church leaders, whose own educational experience probably occurred within the elite halls of academe, to cultivate empathy for those in a quite different experience. The term "student" today does not neatly define what it did in the 1940s. In fact, according to Cross in a recent article, "The new clientele for higher education in the 1970s consists of everyone who wasn't there in the 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s."[3]

Poor students, students who are poor, commuters all! The most immediate educational problem may be finding a parking space. What is the call for "ministry" on an escalator or in a cafeteria line? How could the local church respond?

One thing is clear: student activities, that front line of the churches' ministry to youth in the past, prove largely irrelevant. These students, particularly in large inner-city institutions, have no time on their hands for extra-curricular affairs. The few who are joiners initiate clubs around the concerns they bring with them from the community: ethnic identity and welfare, political affiliations and pressures, recreational interests, and, occasionally, religious zeal. By the time leadership is generated, the key person has moved off as a transfer to a four-year college or stepped out for a semester to earn "bread." The most socially-conscious activists seem currently to have chosen off-campus outlets for their activism. A student who last year was in the "women's movement" told me she had to make a choice in use of her time between the on-campus group or working with the neighborhood Free Clinic. She felt the latter offered more hope for long term effectiveness.

Student government, which arouses very little interest among the campus population, despite its disbursement of fees collected at registration, is either mickey-mouse or a base for political pressure, brought by interest groups which change with the passing winds of each semester.

Unquestionably many persons do have need for intimate and supportive group rela-

tionships. Sometimes this happens through the classroom. More likely they maintain some such relationships in their home neighborhoods. In this do-it-yourself time, no support should be expected for programs planned by outsiders for students.

If the church sees as its primary function to provide religious education programs for youth, extending the senior high fellowship for two more years, then there is little practical need to get excited about the community college. Students there are not looking to the church to establish for them another shelter island. Fellowship may happen around a common seriousness, but "fellowship" arranged for its own sake in this setting, besides being unworkable, is at best irrelevant and at worst a serious breach of the stewardship of time and talents.

It has been suggested that the most neglected area in institutional life is the decision about what to abandon. This is a strong call to churches to abandon the attempt (which can be imperialistic!) to establish little Christian fellowship groups, fraternal chapters of church kids, on commuter college campuses. It is a different set of needs and possibilities which confront us in a call to ministry with community colleges.

Our Concern for the Learning Environment

The church is probably not needed to provide an "alternative environment" on the campus, but our pastoral concern should be directed to the actual environment in which students endeavor to develop. There is expectation and demand (either active or passive) that the college itself be an environment where personhood is valued, enhanced, and channeled. Probably half of the populace, especially in the urban scene, lack strong family relationships to give anchor or direction to their life plan. Few (even nominal church members) rely on the church as an authority-base or person-affirming force in their workaday lives. But almost everyone at one time or another seeks fulfillment of some sort in a school.

Somewhere in our souls we Americans believe that persons and the society can be transformed by education. The church in its American experience has fostered this belief, and would be the first institution to applaud the expectation that all citizens are entitled to not just 12 years of public schooling but also a crack at higher education, as a right not just a privilege. Education has become for many the new secular religion, and the non-traditional college student comes to the accessible community college for a passport to a more desirable place in society, in short, for "salvation." They take literally the publicity blurbs about the "open door," and expect it to lead to warm and accepting living rooms. Having perhaps no other home base, they look to the educational system to fulfill many "non-educational" functions, to provide for affective as well as cognitive needs. It may be true that the school has inherited the extra non-academic responsibilities by default, yet the business of education can take place only in a learning environment for a whole person, what one college president called a "climate of affection and respect for human dignity so that people may be able to work together." There is a philosophical commitment on the part of the Community College educators to provide such an atmosphere. Can the churches support such a goal and call the college to make good on its promises? Is this not our real ministry to and with students today?

As pastors we need to know the human relations factors and practical "personnel services" needs which affect students' possibilities for success. To what extent can we undergird the efforts of the "clients" of these colleges to keep the system responsive and responsible?

It is interesting that in the fall of 1972, at the campus I know best, the only issue around which student activists rallied had to do with quality of food, prices,

and working conditions in the school's cafeteria. In this large metropolitan district, the management of food services had been turned over to outside contract, thus eliminating jobs for student employment. The use of paper utensils, questioned by the ecologists, also eliminated possibility for a student to at least earn free meals by washing dishes. Social concern combined with the empirical experience of less attractive, more costly food, for some felt the workers were being exploited. Student governments from the eight colleges mounted protest. Here was an issue that transcended racism, classism, sexism, and political loyalties! Most students are now potential voters, so the TRUSTEES did listen, and some adjustments were made.

On the surface, this could not be seen as a great educational issue, one in which the churches of the community should have become involved, although moral and ethical questions were at stake. A resident Campus Minister probably would have been involved in discussions and strategy suggestions. It does serve as an example of the need for the college always to be called to account in meeting the physical as well as the intellectual needs of the students.

At a consultation between Community College personnel and Campus Ministers, held in St. Louis in September, 1972, one instructor confessed that he had been surprised at the concern for the physical needs of students evidenced by the clergy. Our practical translation of Matthew 25:34 has not been made visible enough! (Lord, when did we see you hungry and offer you food?) Ministering to people who take their higher education cafeteria-style probably involves concern for the quality of food and standard of working conditions in the actual cafeteria. Adequate non-discriminatory housing and child care facilities may be more telling factors currently for student success. Almost always there is need for book loan and emergency relief funds.

A pastoral concern enters on the quality of life in all of the experiences that people have. Persons coming to the Community College bring a host of peripheral worries and heartaches, prejudices, aspirations which may seem unrealistic, disabilities of one kind or another. It is only in a climate of concern for persons that many will be free to do critical thinking and learn occupational or academic skills.

Is this the role required of the church in our day, to be a thermostat to public education, ready to raise questions with those in authority within the life of the colleges, calling the educational institution to remain faithful to its responsibility to make and maintain things human? I believe that with individuals a pastoral relationship is inseparable from the prophetic role which calls a person to be true to the best that he knows. Just so there is a pastoral/prophetic responsibility to call educators and educational institutions to the fulfillment of announced commitments.

And it is the local church which must do this for the community college. No national boards and agencies can mobilize around specific issues within your parish-community with as much sincerity and effectiveness. Hopefully, you are close enough to the pulse of your community to know where special needs exist, so that your proclamation of good news can be translated into action where there is bad news.

LIBERATION FOR THE DISFRANCHISED

And often the educational experience is bad news, just another reinforcement of a pattern of failure, another case of high hopes shattered. The Open Door can be a trap door for those labeled "high risk" on the basis of previous academic achievement.

It is here that the dilemma facing Community Colleges converges most sharply with the commitment of church bodies to a higher order of justice and liberation for all persons. We act out our concern for persons by focusing on whether or not our schools are a liberating force in society.

A colleague, J. Springer, has written of "THE HIGH RISK STUDENT, THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE,and THE CHURCH AS ADVOCATE."[4] His dream is a group of educators who place high priority on the salvaging of these high-risk young people, seeing this as the fundamental task of the college, not as a marginal task or as a "novel afterthought." He reflects, realistically, that the community college has the possibility of being such an institution, but that a growing number of pressures and concerns are either "contesting or detracting from this task."

The ideal college of the past has served an essentially middle-class clientele. When the community college takes on special responsibility to disadvantaged urban and rural populations, it is, like many of its enrollees, uncertain of its identity! As an extension into grades 13 and 14, does it draw its identity from feeder high schools? Or is it merely a feeder into the four-year colleges, in danger of becoming the "slums of higher education"?[5] Contributing to the dilemma is the influx of more of the traditional students into the two-year colleges for their first years of higher education at lower cost. For the most part this is a positive factor, providing a broader cross-sectio n of intellectual stimulation and multi-cultural experience for everyone. But will this relegate to a back burner the goal of soliciting and serving the high risk students who have no chance elsewhere?

Please understand that the term "new student" or "high risk student" is not a euphemism for "non-white." To quote C ross,

> "Although black and brown and red students are over-represented among this group of New Students, a great disservice has been done to ethnic minorities in equating skin color with low academic achievement. Actually, most of the students flooding into colleges poorly prepared to undertake traditional college work are the white sons and daughters of blue-collar workers.....Numerically, it is whites, not blacks, who have gained educational advantages through open admissions.
>
> "But regardless of skin color, there is a powerful relationship between social class and academic achievement. Over two-thirds of the lowest third of high school graduates are first generation college students; their parents have never experienced college."[6]

The local churches include a share of such persons, whose potentials and strengths must be tapped and given special encouragement. The local pastor in counseling young people needs to be aware of what is offered for them in the local college. He could do much to offset the inferiority complex about "just going to junior college." This would entail getting first-hand knowledge about the wealth of opportunities awaiting the student there. Especially for the "late bloomer," to begin at the junior college offers the bonus of finding oneself as a maturing person and finding new competency as a student, in contrast to getting lost in a big university setting and dropping out for good. Many such case studies can be documented.

Beyond such counseling, the pastor (hopefully with colleagues, lay and clergy) must get into a position to influence the college to awaken such innate potential for growth in these students. Springer, calling the church to an advocacy role in this regard, asks:

> "But why do I address you as a churchman in this concern of mine? Why should I not address you (just) as citizen?.... As a person nurtured on the Judeo-Christian vision, I think you can appreciate in a unique way the attempt of educators to go a second mile for some of our young, when all other institutions have the vision and resources to go only the first mile...the vision of some educators who wish to reach out to those in our society who are being passed by on the other side... I think you can particularly respond to an institution which seeks to give some of our young a second chance, a new opportunity, a new beginning that will break away the suffocating and defeating walls of past decisions and predicaments."[7]

I would change only his use of the word "young," for men and women well past age 30 are seeking such second chances for meaningful life and work. Moreover, the bulk of minority group students now in higher education are in the community colleges. Our denominational commitments to racial justice and equal opportunity draw us close to these colleges whether or not our own youth enroll there, and give urgent responsibility for being prophet-enablers with the college.

Improving the total educational experience for high-risk students means an improved learning environment for all students, and an enhanced experience of American society. In general, our mainline churches have not interacted with the variety of populations represented by the New Students. Instead of planning charity programs for them, church members n ow have opportunity on these democratized campuses to rub shoulders with them as contemporaries widely diverse in cultural backgrounds, values, and life-styles. Here are people who have been coping all their lives with economic and psychological experiences which the instructors analyze! There is also a diversity of ages among those pursuing common educational goals. A University president wrote recently to encourage increased acceptance of such non-traditional students for the sake of the colleges themselves:

> "It isn't only for economic reasons that this new clientele should be encouraged...It's just possible that 'older people' (over twenty-five) may enrich and animate our campuses in a way that hasn't occurred since the golden days of the GI Bill of Rights. It's just possible that people with work experience, plus commitment to learning, will turn out to be the best students we've ever had. It's just possible that age diversity may be as exciting as ethnic and religious diversity, and perhaps more so....I suspect there will be far greater integration among the ages than has yet arrived among the races. I've never yet read a novel in which at least three generations didn't play a role; that may soon prove to be true for higher education as well."[8]

A cure for the generation gap? Enroll yourself and your kids in the Community College! Campus Ministry is indeed a two-way street, benefitting the local congregation with new insights and experiences probably nowhere else so readily available.

Ministry for and with Teachers

What are some ways in which the churches could help to change the odds in favor of the less-favored in the educational scheme of things?

First, we can use our influence with the teachers within these colleges, many of them "children of the church." Whereas administrators may have commitment to the pol-

icies described above, there is little research yet available for teaching those who have these drastic needs for understanding and support. A faculty not basically committed to this as a central task literally does not know how to teach them. And we cannot blithely assume that the faculty is so committed. Cross concludes the article mentioned above with these words: "The full meaning of universal post-secondary education has probably not been understood, and certainly not accepted, by the majority of people whose life work is education." She adds,

> "The most common position among faculty who consider themselves enlightened is that higher education should be open to all those able and willing to do the work in a manner and form in which it is now offered. A second position is taken by a growing minority of misguided liberals who are willing to 'lower standards' of academic education in order to get credentials in the hands of the 'disadvantaged' so that they can obtain the material and social benefits of society.
>
> "Neither position is adequate for these times. The purpose of education is not to certify (especially not falsely) nor is it to prepare a band of elite intellectual leaders (except perhaps in graduate education). It is to maximize the potential of each person to live a fulfilled and constructive life...."[9]

This goal requires major adjustments in educational organization. There is a trend toward new grading systems, so that failure in one course would not haunt the record of a student who, later, in a different major was succeeding and had possibility for progressing. A proposal was made to give a "W" (Withdraw) grade rather than the punitive "F". I have seen a faculty member, a good churchman, absolutely livid at that prospect! He just could not abandon his old system. Tests and measurements and teaching methods from the past, often culturally weighted against the New Student, become moral issues, yet most teachers even in Community Colleges tend to use the same methods with thich they themselves were taught. In a study done by ERIC Clearinghouse, junior college faculty rated themselves as not fully understanding the unique role of the two-year college nor being particularly committed to it philosophically.[10] The New Students still meet the Old Instructors.

A Dean of Instruction told me that the most important contribution the churches could make would be to have some mini-conferences for faculty to "help them not to be afraid of their own students." He sensed that church leadership was closer to the changing needs and values of this generation than those who interact each day with them in the classroom! I would add that church educators are considerably skilled also in a variety of educational approaches, and could contribute much to teaching/learning/counseling situations. I believe colleges would welcome the counseling skills of neighborhood clergy, once they were trustful that parochial interests were not the motivation for their willingness to help.

Short of becoming part-time instructors at the college, how could local pastors influence the personnel services, the curriculum, and the teaching methods?

While I have indicated negativity to organizing student groups on these campuses, I am confident that dialogue groups with faculty members, particularly counselors, are both possible and of mutual benefit. Asking to learn from them their perceptions of student needs and the school's program enhances their self-esteem and gives you valuable insights. Sharing current reading and ideas across inter-disciplinary lines also allows you to raise the value dimension questions. I can document numerous examples

of the "ministry of asking questions," sometimes embarassing ones, which gave added impetus for the college to take action. "Peer Counseling" with faculty may be the most valuable service that can be rendered in behalf of the students whom they influence most directly.

Indeed, Campus Ministry may be carried most surely by church members who are engaged in school-related vocations and avocations. There are many theologically-trained persons on the teaching staffs of Community Colleges. To what extent can we enlist them in a ministry from the inside, encouraging them to keep the institution sensitive to the hope and dreams and special needs of a changing student body from a complex community?

"The church can try to interpret to the college, especially through churchmen who are in places of academic leadership, the just claims of students and faculty that are often not supported by any responsible group."[11]

Advocating for the Open Door to really lead somewhere is top priority for the church's involvement in campus ministry.

Serving the Community

The Open Door needs to be also a double door, and perhaps a swinging one! These colleges can be centers for continuing education, comprehensive institutions tailoring curriculum and services to immediate needs of the community's various organizations and sub-cultures. The COMMUNITY SERVICES component, on paper at least, makes a triangle with the COLLEGE PARALLEL (transfer) program and the OCCUPATIONAL functions. The community services orientation of these colleges represents another point of convergence with the avowed purposes of local churches.

The needs and expressed interest of the community largely determine the nature of these educational programs, marking the unique contribution of Community Colleges within higher education and within the social change process. Probably no other pair of major institutions share with Church and Community Colleges their kind of concern for the socialization and self-actualization of the individual. At the same time, both institutions at their best are truly community-oriented and, hopefully, most responsive to the shifting needs and interests of a rapidly changing social order.

Donald A. Deppe, staff member with the U.S. Office of Education, wrote in 1969 about "seeking new ways (for the colleges) to establish themselves as reserviors of responsiveness to the recurring pleas from our cities and towns for assistance in coping with change and solving the pressing problems of our complex and complexing communities.....(and) to the forces in the community which cry out for educational reform... to advocate and demonstrate the viability of bringing colleges and communities together in mutually beneficial ways."[12]

Doesn't that sound like a resolution passed at a church conference? And doesn't it suggest that the churches should take advantage of the "community services" offered? The churches are learning/growth centers, too, very much in the business of adult education. Ministry of one institution with another is possible. I would like to see the churches use the resources and facilities of their community colleges for their own efforts at leadership training and consciousness-raising. Few models for joint church and community college undertakings have been reported, but one example will be helpful.

A Health Fair, conceived by a cooperative agency of local churches and synagogues, then coordinated and partially funded through the Community Services department of the

college, turned the campus into a free diagnostic clinic for a Saturday, with the help of bi-lingual physicians, nurses, technicians, and numerous allied-health organizations. Some 7,000 people participated; over 4,000 were given tests and/or referrals for free services. Ethnic dance and music groups entertained to ease the tedium of standing in line, demonstrating the contribution of cultural pluralism within the life of the community. The culmination was a celebrative salute to health, with wishes for health attached to balloons released against a sunset sky. Neither the churches nor the college could have done this alone. It is doubtful that it would have been done had the churches not taken the initiative.

The scope of this paper does not permit to enlarge here on Community Services, about which I have written and in which I am deeply involved as a Campus Minister. The opportunity exists for the local churches to be catalysts, enablers, and important input/feedback agents for the college to give priority to community services as the very heart of their total enterprise. "While transfer courses enable persons to go on toward a baccalaureate degree, and while occupational programs enable the student to find a job, community services activities help people to live and to maximize life. They are an end in themselves," says the editor of the CATALYST.[13]

Shepherd of Systems: Dealing with Decision-Makers

This belief is not necessarily shared by policy makers who control budget and staff assignments, the Trustees of a college district. To them, cost-effectiveness and getting re-elected by the tax-payers may be much more central concerns!

No matter what great ideas for relevant education and learning-for-life may be generated through student/faculty/administrator efforts, or even through the churches of the community, unless the Board of Trustees can be persuaded to approve and vote necessary funds, the process is at a standstill, and sometimes reversed.

Trustees, like Community College Administrators, are sensitive to the expressed concerns of citizen groups...they have to be! Basic financial support is generated locally, as well as the policy-making process. If some voucher system becomes law, these institutions will be vying for students in order to get matching state funds.

The church still stands in a community as an agency of "moral dialogue," a voluntary association of people of goodwill, a little public. When we become advocates, especially in behalf of those who may never darken our doors, somebody listens. The church-as-advocate can make a difference.

As early as 1967, W. Hadyn Ambrose suggested:

> "There is still another form which the ministry of the local church can take in relation to the college...although it is difficult to articulate and often impossible to fulfill. This is the church's ministry to the structures of the (colleges) themselves.....When new schools are developed, especially junior colleges, the first ministry of the local church should not be to race to the campus with chaplains and religious centers, but to march to the local school boards and state legislatures to lobby for high standards of education in these institutions."[14]

Because of their local base, the Community Colleges will be the most fertile field in all of higher education for such an expression of ministry. Being prophet/enabler for responsible decision-making in public education may be the most important pastoral service to students. "Focus on the individual and his vicissitudes are like

looking at the trees" without seeing the configuration of the forest, suggests Dr. E. Mansell Pattison in the Journal of Pastoral Care[15] and "the pastor who is a shepherd of systems will seek to place his given social system (church) in context as a sub-system vis-a-vis other major sub-systems."

There are forces and personnel within the public education system today, particularly in elected Boards, whose programs and practices threaten the development of individual autonomy and experience in the democratic order. Their orientation may be unsympathetic to overcoming unjust or inadequate education programs for the New Students, the disenfranchised with whom the church in compassion identifies. But they have been elected. Such leadership needs to be countered and replaced if necessary and possible. Such leadership has to be responsive to expressed concerns of "little publics" who are part of their voting constituencies. Local churches, especially in concert on an ecumenical basis, could raise a voice that would be heard by the policy-makers.

In recent years, particularly in urban areas, there have been major church-initiated task forces at work examining the public educational system and mobilizing citizen action to effect changes. At the national level, Christian Education and Home Mission Boards created the UNITED MINISTRIES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION in 1971. Nowhere in their literature have I found mention of Community Colleges, which in many areas would be more quickly responsive to such coalitions of citizens than the large bureaucracies of the unified school system. (There are only a few of the ponderous, multi-campus Community College districts, although this may be the trend.) Many Community Colleges are relatively new, eager for community support and concern. The opportunity to influence the direction of these more flexible institutions is considerable. Even churches who take active "social concern" for their local public school affairs, Board elections and bond issues, have largely passed by on the other side in like issues involving the Community College.

Does our faith and our concern for persons not compel us to enter a ministry of redemption for educational systems? This is Campus Ministry without stepping foot on the campus! And it is within the scope of the mission of both the Christian Education committee and the Social Concerns or Public Affairs committee of the local church. It is a natural extension of pastoral concern, prophetic witness, and "speaking truth to power." I see this as the front line of ministry, on the agenda of every church and every pastor.

A Local Church Imperative

The national and regional church bodies, through whom ministry within higher education is carried on behalf of local churchmen, have not yet allocated resources nor mobilized knowledgable personnel for interaction with the nation's community colleges. In the National Commission of the UNITED MINISTRIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION (a covenant ministry of ten denominations), an Arena Team of Staff and committee now give this priority. We are attempting to develop a network of churchmen concerned about Community Colleges, from within the colleges and from within the churches. Financial resources are minimal, but to a limited extent we can provide resource materials, regional consultations and training conferences. Our goal: to enable local congregations to be about this task of ministry.

Even if 1,000 professional Campus Ministers were suddenly deployed to Community College campuses, it would still be local churches to whom local decision-makers would listen, to whom persons young and old could turn for guidance into continuing educational opportunity, and through whom Christian concern for the life of the larger community could be channeled.

Why should the local church get excited about the Community College? Probably half of our church youth will be moving into undergraduate work there, gaining insight into and respect for the varieties of cultures, developing academic talents and job skills, experiencing community service. No more promising vehicle exists in your community for the marginal student, where his strengths and abilities can be built upon and the failure syndrome be replaced with success experiences.

Senator Harrison Williams told Community College educators: "For many, school often becomes a barrier, an intrusion, a waste of time. But the two-year college is different. You are new, flexible, adaptable, alert to opportunities and ready for change. You have the best chance, maybe the last chance, to link living and learning. You can, with the right amount and kind of help, TURN THE WORLD AROUND during the next exciting decade."[16]

The churches are the modern-day extension of an ancient fellowship of whom it was said, THEY TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN - and yet they hold it together. Human ecology is an overriding concern for both institutions. People-changers need each other. And every chuch must become a "college-related" church.

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